

Public Schools: Average Daily Attendance

OFFICE OF PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

Draft Project Scope

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School districts in Idaho receive a significant portion of their state funding based on the average daily attendance (ADA) of students in public schools. Student attendance is a factor in determining the allocation of state funds for costs such as instructional and non-instructional staff salaries and Safe and Drug-Free School programs. According to the State Department of Education, each school district has the responsibility to collect and retain student attendance information. Both state law and administrative rules define ADA and establish how it should be calculated.

Lawmakers have expressed concern that some public schools may not be determining ADA in accordance with state requirements. Inconsistent calculation of ADA could result in public education funds being distributed to districts in an unintended or inequitable manner. An evaluation of the processes used to determine ADA would assess whether schools are calculating ADA appropriately, and if changes are needed to ensure the integrity of this information. In addition, this evaluation would explore methods other states use to distribute funds to the various types of public schools.

This evaluation will focus on the following questions:

- What requirements and guidance exist to dictate how Idaho school districts determine ADA? How well do the requirements and guidance direct the districts in determining ADA?
- How do Idaho's school districts determine ADA? Do the districts follow any relevant requirements and guidance? Are the processes to determine ADA consistent among the districts? What challenges do districts face in determining and submitting ADA information?
- How do Idaho's practices for determining and submitting ADA information in public schools compare with other states that allot funding based on attendance information? Do different states employ different standardized processes for collecting this information than are used by Idaho schools?
- Do any challenges exist in using ADA to distribute funding to non-traditional schools, such as charter and virtual schools? Do other states use different approaches for funding public schools?

Requested by Senator John Goedde